

# DORIS ORTIZ

i SALON

NEW YORK, NY

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWER	Candacy Taylor
INTERVIEWEE:	Doris Ortiz
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CT: Can you state your full name, your profession and how long you've been doing hair.

DO: Usually I register my husband's name but I use my real name. Is that okay? Do I have to put my husband's name? My last name is Ortiz.

CT: Whatever you prefer. It's up to you.

DO: But I already signed the [consent] form as Che.

CT: That's fine. What do you prefer?

DO: I prefer maybe, Ortiz?

CT: Okay, that's fine. So state how many years you've been doing hair.

DO: Oh, I've been doing hair when I start school, in like 1988.

CT: And you're from Singapore. Where else have you lived? Did you come straight to New York?

DO: No, I came to Queens straight to my sister's house and family in Queens.

CT: And then did you move to Manhattan?

DO: No, I lived a while with my sister there for a year and then I moved to SoHo. I have a roommate.

CT: Do you still live in SoHo?

DO: No, I live far [away] right now. It's White Plains.

CT: Oh, and how long is your commute?

DO: Maybe take an hour each way.

CT: So it must be intense having a salon in Manhattan?

DO: Yes.

CT: Very expensive?

DO: I think so, yes. Very.

CT: Emily mentioned that you had to move, you had to change salons? You were in Union Square?

DO: Yes.

CT: So tell me about that.

DO: First when I came to New York I [inaudible] with a job in Union Square at International Hair Cutting. So I was happy to stay at this place for like six years. So then I decide to have my own place and I moved to 14<sup>th</sup> Street, 150 East. My clients and loyal customer's followed me. And so I stayed there about 15 years. They tried to raise the rent too high, I cannot...

CT: How much did they raise it?

DO: Oh, \$22,000.

CT: \$22,000!

DO: A month.

CT: 22?

DO: Thousand.

CT: What was it before?

DO: Before, it started at about five or six, little by little they go [up].

CT: Is that legal? I thought they had laws to prevent that?

DO: Because you have [been there] a long time, when you started and the price was lower, so every two years they raise [the rent]. So by the time 15 years [had passed], they don't negotiate so. I was a little bit more concerned with my old clients from many years, from 14 Union Square and no place would be lower [pricewise]. I had decided in six months I had to prepare to move here.

CT: So how much is this? Is it more reasonable?

DO: Yeah, more reasonable. But it's still expensive, but it's better. And my client's came and followed me. But I still lose a lot [of business] now. People feel that if you move three, two blocks they think that it's not convenient. So only loyal customers for

20 years have followed me. But I am word of mouth, you know, it's busy, people see me and in the Village, they live here, so they still come here.

CT: Why did you choose to become a hairdresser?

DO: I think when I was young and I need to [think about] my future and had the love to do hair. So that was my passion, my hair and I just love hair.

CT: You said you have a very diverse clientele. Can tell me about working with different hair textures, because especially with Asian hair, is that what you might specialize in, or Indian hair?

DO: Yes.

CT: Because it obviously has a different texture than mine, or than Caucasian. So do you train your stylists to work in all....?

DO: I love all type of hair, so my passion, I guess I have a feeling with hair that I have to keep doing [it and] it's better. I have to do a lot of seminars. I go to California, I go to Hong Kong and I learned skills from Vidal Sassoon and learn a lot of the new thing coming [trends].

CT: So you go to Hong Kong. How is it different? What did you learn in Hong Kong? Are there conferences?

DO: I learn more in Hong Kong about what styling and what color. But most of the time when I get here in New York I learn a lot of things. Most...90%, I learn in New York. I still go to and take the exam in the barber school, how they use the clipper machine and do very fast. Cut hair in like three minutes, five minutes.

CT: Three to five minutes, you can do a haircut?

DO: Three to five minutes, one haircut. I learned in the barbershop. I go to school and I learn.

CT: So you went to barber school.

DO: Yeah, I still go to barber school.

CT: And you went to cosmetology school?

DO: Yes. I go to my country for Cosmetology but I transferred here.

CT: Into barber school. Why did you choose barber school?

DO: Because I want to learn how to do the clipper. Because the machine clipper, in school they didn't train you [because] it wasn't that popular before.

CT: So just another part of the experience that you wanted to learn.

DO: Yes.

CT: Interesting. So do you feel like cutting with different hair types...you have something that's unique because you've been trained in Hong Kong and because you have worked with Asian hair, do you feel like that has helped you in terms of working with different kinds of hair?

DO: Yes. Actually all types of hair, different culture hair, is a very different than Asian hair.

CT: Can you tell me why?

DO: Because Asian hair is straightened, like very straight and they have the cowlick's. Now the hair cowlicks, every person has different directions that it grow, so Asian hair is most important with the cowlicks at the crown, either they go very short and the hair doesn't stick up.

CT: How do you make it do what you want it to do? Do you work with it?

DO: Yes, that is a good question you ask me. With Asian hair, if they agree to go short, you just go at one length or you go with the shape of the head. If they like it long or in-between medium, either you have to do a little bit, body wave, just a little bit on top at the cowlick and let them see a little bit natural curl. You cover the head

shape and come up and style it, is better. So if they don't want to do any chemical so we have to texture[ize] the hair. So we use texture with the scissor thinning. So we take a little blending and [inaudible].

CT: Okay so you try to thin out where the cowlick is and maybe deemphasize how it's falling. So is that why there were Japanese straightening products? Was it to straighten cowlicks? Because Japanese hair is already straight...mostly.

[There is a lot of noise in the salon so Doris asks the workers not use the water while we are recording]

CT: So we were talking about cowlicks in Asian hair and how challenging it is to get them straight. So that Japanese hair straightening technique, was it to deal with that? Or is for Japanese people who do have body, which I don't see that often.

DO: They do, they have natural hair, curly, so if they want the hair straight, it [the curl] won't come back, permanently.

CT: It straightens it.

DO: Yes. We still talk about cowlicks, because with the perm, you have body wave, or they don't like to see that curly hair, like with Spanish hair and they want to make it straight.

CT: So Spanish hair is revered in [that culture]. That want that type of...interesting.

DO: Yeah, they want it very straight and with the perm it [the curl] doesn't come back. With the perm it take nine months to one year and then you can retouch, but only the root.

CT: So it's that strong. Would you ever use that product on any other kind of hair?

DO: Yeah we use Japanese products.

CT: The straightening solutions? You use it on other types of hair? Do you find it works as well?

DO: No, no.

CT: Yeah, I wouldn't think so.

DO: When we use what is required for Japanese hair and now we have to use the lotion to follow it. It takes like three to four hours.

CT: Interesting. I see you also do the Brazilian Blowout.

DO: Yes.

CT: And do you do the Keratin Treatment? Do you use that on other types of hair? How do you determine...because there are so many straightening processes that seem to be geared toward a particular culture. But I see that they are used on different people. Like a lot of black women were getting the Japanese straightener but it wasn't good for their hair. So can you tell me why that wasn't good?

DO: For the African American hair, they have a different texture and it's very fine, it's very delicate and once you use the chemical it would straighten the hair and just completely damage it. That's why we have a new thing coming, it's called Keratin Treatment and it's for very damaged hair that either has double processing or hair that was very weak so we suggest that they use the Brazilian-Keratin.

CT: So that's adding Keratin into the hair shaft so it's strengthening it versus the Japanese straightener, which is almost destroying that cuticle. Is there a difference between Japanese hair and Chinese hair and Korean hair? Yes?

DO: Why they call Japanese hair, [inaudible] like people have curly hair, they have very frizzy hair, it takes a long time to grow their hair, and it takes a lot of work everyday to go out, when you wash it you still need to blow dry it. So if they love the hair straight they do the Japanese [perm]. The Japanese [perm] opens the cuticle up and then seals in the chemical and then we have to put neutralizer and lock in the hair and it just leaves your hair straightened.

CT: And there's not thermal (heating) with the Japanese straightener is there, like the Brazilian?

DO: It has heating, because when you are processing to open the cuticle.

CT: Oh, they do use heat. Okay.

DO: So we need to check out the hair.

CT: Is it heating under the dryer or with a flat iron?

DO: Sometimes, we use both. We use either the plastic cap with the heat for about 15 minutes and check the processing we've done, so we continue to take it out and neutralize and then we flat iron. So with the perm [inaudible] we don't need to do the whole thing, we can do half and half, half with the Japanese perm and then half without. So it will give you more body underneath and the top of the crown would make it permanent [straight], so when your hair is long it just makes it more natural shape. Make sense? So if you do and it doesn't look very natural, like pin straight. Do you need to know about the Brazilian-Keratin?

CT: I've heard about it in the context of using it on black hair for the Keratin Treatment but then there's the Dominican Blowout that doesn't use any chemicals right?

DO: Dominican, they usually use it more [for] relaxing the hair.

CT: With heat.

DO: With heat, and either they blow dry real natural, or they have to do the perm. We don't suggest that you do the perm with the permanent Japanese, we suggest that you do the Keratin [Treatment]. Keratin is the best way to keep the hair healthy. It take out the frizz. It will be back in three months.

CT: So you do it every three months. But that also has the chemical formaldehyde in it?



DO: They say by law, the FDA agency allow us to do it 1.8 percent [formaldehyde], no more that 2 [%], so you have to make sure what company you're getting it from.

CT: Ok, so have you noticed a difference in the performance of the product?

DO: The technology, the chemical, whatever they have it now is very good. If you get the right thing to do it and make sure that the product is [applied] evenly to the cuticle. And then we use the temperature that is required to flat iron [the hair], so it can be nice and smooth.

CT: And do you have to have a ventilation system for the chemicals?

DO: Yes. Either we have ventilation, or we open the door to let the air out.

CT: Can you talk about the physical labor of the job? Are there parts of your body that you feel are more affected?

DO: I forgot to tell you, we also wear masks.

CT: With the Keratin Treatment?

DO: Yes, we make sure that it is safe.

CT: So with the physical labor of the job are there parts of your body that are affected more than others with the labor of hairdressing?

DO: No, I'm basically used to it.

CT: You don't have any pain?

DO: No.

CT: Your body feels totally fine? You're the first person who has told me that. Everybody says my feet or my back [hurt], they have carpal tunnel. [You have] no problems? No physical problems?

DO: I guess I do, I just do yoga. I do yoga everyday, I take 20 minutes to do yoga. And at night when I go home I go to the gym. It helps.

CT: That makes a big difference I'm sure. Are you concerned about the toxicity of the chemicals that you use?

DO: No. Now the technology is very good they make sure it's very mild. They don't use it very strong so and now the chemical is a very low percentage and now they have natural, organic stuff, even shampoo, conditioner is all natural and organic. Kevin Martin is very good. They have no chemicals. It's from Australia.

CT: I know that you have [eyebrow] threading here. Will somebody do it today?

DO: Yes.

CT: Because I've only seen it a couple of times so can you talk about eyebrow threading and how it's done. It's amazing to watch.

DO: The threading is the only thing in the face for sensitive skin, so for people who get waxing [inaudible], so with the twisting we try to pull real fine hair out and give it a shape and prevent red skin or rash.

CT: So did you know how to do this before? I know it's a big trend now, but did you always know how to do this? When was the first time you learned about it?

DO: I went to Singapore, I like to see new things. I went to school there, I take 3 days to...

CT: To learn how to do it?

DO: Yes.

CT: Was that recent?

DO: Yeah, like five, six years ago.

CT: And how long have you been doing threading in this salon?

DO: Threading? On 14<sup>th</sup> Street we have one Indian girl, she did it for like more than 10 years.

CT: And so you have an Indian woman who you hired to do it. [An employee walks up to the table with a platter of food]

DO: She's the one keeper, she do threading. She started for us and when I go to school in my country so I lived there. It's very interesting. I love it.

CT: Well people are obviously doing it because it's new and it's amazing to watch, but the advantage of that over plucking is that there are no bumps and no rash?

DO: No, no rash.

CT: And especially with waxing, right?

DO: Waxing is good because waxing is very faster but for the skin it doesn't get [inaudible] and some people are very sensitive.

CT: Just a quick question about you being a business owner in Manhattan. We talked a little bit before about how expensive it is. What is the most you spend the most money on? Is it marketing, your rent?

DO: The rent of course and [inaudible]

CT: Utilities.

DO: And a lot of products and [hair] color. And now everything is very natural and organic so to give the customers satisfaction and to keep them happy we treat them with the best products. And we use quality nail polish, OPI and we use [inaudible].

CT: I hear that's been going up with gas prices, getting the products to you, the shipping.

DO: Yes, the shipping they charge you, yes.

CS: Can I ask one question about organic products? I'm curious, is the reason you started carrying these types of products because of customer demand? Did people start asking more for organic, because I ask for that when I go to salons.

DO: It is more natural, the type of hair with people asking for the color, most of these people have grey and they want to use something that's more natural, it doesn't last long, it will come back again. So when we use organic things, it's more expensive. It will double the price.

CS: But is this coming from the customer?

DO: No the customer will ask for what they needed, the natural stuff. We don't let the customers pick the products.

CT: Right, but since this is a service that you're offering, did you choose to do this or was it pressure from the customer wanting it so then you decided to do it. Since it's more expensive.

DO: No we choose based on what the customer ask for so we provide everything for the customer.

CT: So it is customer demand.

DO: Because when you're in business you've got to do everything. It doesn't matter, they pay and they understand, but very expensive. I told you the rent, not cheap.

CT: But it's cheaper [than her former location at Union Square].

DO: Half the price.

CT: And you have such reasonable prices, so how do you even afford...?

DO: We did good because you have to, just day by day, you have to pick it up, everyday, you're open seven days so you still will get customers. So you lose some,

you get some. You balance it out. And they [the customers] move too, they're not in New York all the time, they move. Donna, she's a new client who moved here, so she come here every week. Donna [she calls to her sitting in the chair], that's my new regular customer.

CT: Hi

D: I love Doris. She really knows what she's doing. And I've had several compliments on how my hair looks.

CT: So what does she do differently?

D: She really cares about my hair, and not everyone knows how to handle curly hair. Doris knows how to handle it. She knows how to cut my hair. It's different. It really is different.

DO: And you do the Brazilian- Keratin.

D: Oh, yeah. I do the Brazilian. I've had it done before where my hair gets really straight and dry, that doesn't happen here.

CT: What do you do differently?

DO: Because the hair is very curly and wavy, it's frizzy. So to make the hair calm down and to make it shine and healthy is the Brazilian-Keratin Treatment.

CT: But you're doing something different, because I've heard that Brazilian treatments on curly hair can sometimes be too straight, or it's too dry. Are they putting too much heat or too much chemical? Is that possible?

DO: We only do partial. We only do the top hair and the rest we just blow dry. So it gives you more natural movement. We don't want to do the whole thing, it costs more time, in New York City not everybody can sit down for two hours or four hours.

DO: Twenty minutes, thirty minutes, that's it. Boom. In New York you have to be fast. I can do a haircut in three minutes, five minutes. I will work so fast. I love hair. I do it very fast.

[END]